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INSTRUCTIONS CONCERNING GERMAN ARMY
MEDICAL EXAMINATIONS IN WAR TIME.

The information contained herein is based largely on an official German Army publication, "Vorschrift Über Wehrmachtärztliche Untersuchungen im Kriege", HDv 252/4, MDv 248/4, LDv 399/4, containing instructions for judging physical fitness at "Musterungen" (draft examinations), dated 1 April 1944, which replaces instructions issued on 8 Dec 1942.

This has been supplemented with information recently obtained from other intelligence sources.

1. Regardless of the optimum physical standards set up by the German army in peace time, down grading has been necessary during the war in order to make more men available to the Wehrmacht. It must be decided during war time what degree of usefulness a man, who is eligible for the army, presents. If a man is not eligible because he is unfit for combat, it must be determined in what capacity he is still useful to the Wehrmacht. (e.g., at home, or in the occupied areas). It must be decided whether he is useful for the Wehrmacht everywhere and in any capacity, for fighting units on a limited duty status, for the Wehrmacht at home, or whether he is altogether unfit for the Wehrmacht.

2. Present Classification System.

a. Physically fit individuals are classified into the following groups.

(1) k.v. -- Kriegsverwendungsfähig. This comprises all individuals who are healthy or have no important defects. They are fit for general duty without limitation. This corresponds to the "General Assignment" status of our own army.

(2) bed. k.v. -- Bedingt-kriegsverwendungsfähig. Fit for general duty under certain conditions. This group usually suffers from certain physical defects which ordinarily would make them unfit for front line duty, such as, blindness of, or loss of one eye. However, if the other eye is normal, the soldier can be classified k.v. Usually the bed. k.v.'s are used as supply troops for combat units, in rear areas, on the home front in accordance with special instructions of the Wehrmacht, in occupied countries as air raid personnel, etc. All bed. k.v.'s can be re-examined at any time and are subject to classification as k.v.'s.

(3) a.v. -- Arbeitsverwendungsfähig. Fit for general labor. These draftees are available only for duty on the home front:

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- (a) As trainers, for guard duty in offices, as workers in kitchens, shops, stables, as orderlies, etc.
- (b) With units, such as, HQ company, garrison battalions or companies (housekeeping units).
- (c) As employees and laborers at all military posts.
- (d) With air raid warden units.

b. Individuals declared unfit for the Wehrmacht may fall into either of the following groups:

(1) z.u. -- Zeitlich Untauglich. -- Temporarily unfit. If at the time of the medical examination, the draftee suffers from a temporary disease or ailment, fracture, etc., which can be cured within a limited time, the draftee cannot be called into service and is deferred for a limited period. The date for a new examination for the purpose of reclassification must be fixed (e.g., temporarily unfit, re-examination after two months). Re-examination is carried out after the stated period of deferment to determine whether the individual is fit or whether a renewed deferment must be granted. The expression zeitlich untauglich (temporarily unfit) applies only to draftees, not to soldiers.

(2) w.u. -- Wehruntauglich. -- The completely unfit. The draftee cannot be used in any capacity or for any type of service in the Wehrmacht. If the results of the first examination are doubtful, the draftee may be submitted to an examination by a specialist. Soldiers who become w.u.'s must be discharged from the army immediately, since they may be used more profitably in the war effort in some other capacity. For determination of their status, they may be admitted to army hospitals. This does not apply equally to civilian draftees.

3. Tables of Classification.

a. Every German civilian physician or medical officer who works for the draft board must act in strict accordance with a "Table of Classification", which permits him to classify each individual case. All known physical defects or diseases are mentioned and grouped. Diseases of the same organ are put together for convenience. Each disease group, represented in the same line of the table, is given one number. The diseases as such and the degree of severity decide the man's classification status. For an easier understanding of these tables, a portion is reprinted from the same German publication.

	KRIEGSVERWENDUNGSFÄHIG = k.v. (Fit for general duty.)		ZEITLICH UNTAUGLICH = z.u. (Temporarily unfit.)	BEDINGT- KRIEGS VERWENDUNGS- FÄHIG = bed.k.v. (Condition- ally k.v.)	ARBEITS VERWEN- DUNGS- FÄHIG = a.v. (Fit for gen.labor)	WEHRUN- TAUGLICH = w.u. (Unfit for duty.)	
Dis- abil. No.	A	B	Z	L	U	vU	Dis- abil. No.
47	Calcified lung foci, remnants of lung or pleura diseases, such as, adhesions, etc.	Inclination to recurrent Bronchitis	Acute diseases of the lungs and the pleura.	Chronic diseases of the respir. tract that do not affect the working ability to a large extent (infectious tuberculosis excepted.)	Chronic diseases of the resp. tract with severe affection of the working ability. Also, infectious tbc, if danger of spread can be excluded.	All forms of progressive infectious tbc of the lungs.	47

S E C R E T

b. The top line represents the five classification groups that have been discussed before. The next line represents six deficiency or disease groups and all existing disabilities fall into either one of these six groups. The figure to the left and to the right (47 in our example) indicates the disability number.

c. Definition of letters used in the Table.

(1) A - This includes minor physical defects, e.g., height under 160 cms., several benign skin conditions, minor allergic symptoms, well-healed fractures, nervousness, reduced intelligence, etc.

(2) B - Moderate physical defects, height under 154 cms., benign recurrent skin conditions, benign tumors, fractures healed with good functional results, ptosis, strabismus, perforation of the ear drum, etc. Both A & B groups are fully k.v. and can be used as combat troops without limitation.

(3) Z - This represents the group with acute diseases of the skin, curable disturbances of development, general debility after disease or injury, fracture, suspicion of epilepsy, acute neuritis or arthritis and acute diseases of the eye and ear. All of them are classified z.u. - temporarily unfit. Re-classification into the k.v. group is possible at any time.

(4) L - More serious physical defects are included in this category but individuals with such handicaps may be considered fit under certain conditions. These defects include height under 154 cms. with general weakness, severe chronic diseases of the skin, frostbite, large benign tumors, fractures or bone diseases resulting in serious loss of function, occasional attacks of gout, mental debility, proven cases of epilepsy, night blindness, chronic otitis media, severe chronic sinusitis, inoperable goiter, beginning essential hypertension, etc. Certain "L" cases can be classified k.v. at the discretion of the medical officer, or if the draftee volunteers for it.

(5) U - Untauglich. This includes endocrine disturbances, late luetic symptoms, malignant tumors, serious or progressive diseases of the bones, chronic blood diseases like leutemia, pernicious anemia, epileptic fits, blindness of one eye, etc. These are usually a.v. (Arbeitsverwendungsfähig), fit for general labor but incurable.

(6) vU - Vollkommen untauglich. This includes complete blindness, deafness, severe diseases of the esophagus, severe chronic diseases of the heart or kidneys, tuberculosis, loss of both arms or legs, etc. This means that the individual is not able to perform any type of duty.

d. Practical examples of how the table works are as follows:

(1) A man reports to the draft board for his physical examination. The examination reveals that he has some calcified lung foci and some pleuritic adhesions. The medical officer now looks into his table (see above) and finds this deficiency listed as an A deficiency, disability no. 47. That puts the draftee automatically into the k.v. group.

(2) The next reporting draftee may suffer from a progressive infectious tuberculosis. The medical officer would again find this condition under disability no. 47, but this time in the vU column. The top of the column indicates the man's classification status as w.u. - Unfit for duty.

(3) Certain diseases can be listed as U or vU deficiencies depending on the severity of the condition, so that the last two columns of the classification table would look like this:

S E C R E T

ARBEITSVERWENDUNGS- FÄHIG a.v.	WEHRUNTAUGLICH w.u.	Disability No.
U	vU	
Bronchial-Asthma with constant attacks and with constant severe interference of the man's working ability.		48

This shows the deficiency no. 48, bronchial-asthma, can be a U deficiency in which case the draftee should be classified a.v. - fit for general labor. However, if the condition is very severe, it can also be a vU deficiency, in which case the man would be classified w.u. - unfit for duty. In such a case the physical deficiency and the degree of it, combined with consideration for the kind of duty that this man should perform, form the decisive factor in his further classification. The medical officer has very little leeway in deciding a man's status and must act in strict accordance with these tables. Each time he decides on fitness or unfitness of a draftee or volunteer, the column and number of the deficiency that disqualifies a man and on which he bases his judgment, must be quoted from the deficiency table. E.g.,

Herman Schulz -- vU 48 -- w.u. (Wehruntauglich).

Re-examination by higher medical authorities are common and changes in a man's status are frequent.

4. Reports.

At the end of each induction period, the chief physician of every induction board should report on important observations to the surgeon of the Wehrkreis (army district or service command) in which he works. The surgeons of Wehrkreise report to the Chief Surgeon of the army, expressing their own critical viewpoints. A statistical report about the results of the medical examination may be ordered from time to time.

5. Previous German classification systems.

a. In the spring of 1939 the Wehrmacht had 7 medical categories:

- (1) 1 to 3 Fit for service.
- (2) 4, 5 gvH "garrison duty only".
- (3) 6 av "work details only".
- (4) 7 wu (unfit for military service).

b. In the winter of 1941 the following changes were made.

- (1) 1 kv
- (2) 2 gvF - literally translated "garrison duty field", included service in line companies, but the men were not supposed to be used as combat troops.
- (3) 3 gvH - "garrison duty home". This included all occupied territories.
- (4) 4 av
- (5) 5 wu.

S E C R E T

c. In the summer of 1943 the terms gvII and gvF were dropped completely. The categories now were:

- (1) kv
- (2) kv1 (e.g. a stiff elbow). Field Army, non combat.
- (3) kv2 (stiff elbow and use of one hand only): Field Army, non combat.
- (4) kv3 (e.g. stiff elbow, use of one hand, use of one ear): garrison duty.
- (5) av
- (6) wu.

d. In the spring of 1944 categories kv1, kv2 and kv3 were classified "combat duty".

e. It appears that since the class kv was seriously depleted before 1 April 1944, the former class gvF was upgraded to kv and so on down the line. A man with only one eye, e.g., was formerly classified gvII but is now classified bed. kv - kv under certain conditions, or even kv, if the eyesight on the other eye is normal. PW who had lost his right eye had been wounded twice and who had malaria was still classified bed. kv., before being captured.

6. Deterioration in the physical standards of the German army are indicated by the following:

a. A PW states that nearly all personnel are now being placed either in the kv or the bed. kv categories, regardless of physical condition or state of health. In recent call-ups for the people's army (Volkssturm), gross physical defects and diseases have been ignored and candidates who ordinarily would never pass are now accepted for full or limited front line duty. In some instances individuals have been accepted for some type of military duty while suffering from mental deficiency, serious skeletal deformities, epileptiform seizures, serious skin disorders, incurable growths, deafness, and defects of sight. The report indicates that Hitler himself has become vitally interested in the problem and had issued orders to all medical officers that they must be very strict in enforcing the new regulations, demanding that every individual do the utmost of which he is physically capable. The PW felt that this order is being carried out to the extreme, that people must serve in the army regardless of physical disability. The same source gives the following instructions as to the disposition of officers after hospitalization.

"All officers who are kv on the day of their discharge should be returned immediately to their respective reserve units, not to any course for convalescent officers."

b. According to a recent OKW Order, German army doctors have again been instructed to lower medical standards in inducting men into the army. Some of the conditions of the order are,

- (1) Epileptics will no longer be exempted.
- (2) Men who have lost an arm or a leg will no longer be discharged from the service, but will be on duty with rear echelons.
- (3) Men with stomach diseases will be declared ready for duty at once. They will receive a special diet in their battalion kitchen.
- (4) Men stricken with malaria are not to be sent to hospitals except in the most severe cases but are to be treated by the doctor of their unit.

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(5) Men who are nearsighted, hard of hearing, who have speech impediments, foot diseases of any kind are fit for duty.

(6) Before all examinations for induction or discharge, the examining doctor is given to understand how many of the examined persons must be declared fit for service. In the younger classes, this percentage amounts to about 95%.

(7) Men who come to examinations with a doctor's certificate receive punishment.

(8) Men who have been incapacitated for army service will be registered for war work before they are given an official discharge.

c. Stomach battalions. A further deterioration of classification standards is indicated in recent "Instructions for the Army Military Service" issued in Wehrkreis VI (Münster-Westphalen), dated 10 June 1944, which stated:

"Patients with stomach diseases, who need a diet, should be immediately discharged and transferred to a 'Stomach Reserve and Training Battalion'. Since the continuation of the necessary diet is guaranteed in the Stomach Battalion, all 'Stomach Units' will be made known within a short time, but they exist in all Wehrkreise. Stomach cases that cannot be discharged into a Stomach Battalion have to be changed to a normal diet before leaving the hospital."

d. Ear Battalions. So called Ear Battalions have been formed in all Wehrkreise. All personnel with serious ear conditions are being incorporated into these battalions. This includes perforations of the ear drum, otosclerosis, serious loss of hearing, complete loss of hearing in one ear with 50% on one ear; Meniere's Syndrome; chronic otitis media, etc.

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